

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

October 18, 2004
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Noble, and Councilmembers Balducci¹, Chelminiak, Davidson, Degginger, and Lee²

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Noble opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and announced recess to Executive Session for approximately 10 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation.

The meeting resumed at 6:25 p.m. with Mayor Marshall presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Neighborhood Vitality and Livability (NIS Phase 2)

Planning Director Dan Stroh recalled discussion with Council on September 13 regarding Phase 2 of the Neighborhood Investment Strategy. The purpose of tonight's discussion is to explore how involved the City should be in preserving the health and vitality of older neighborhoods. Signs of a distressed neighborhood can include a lack of investment in private housing, the conversion of owner-occupied housing to rentals, poor property maintenance, higher than average crime rate, low enrollment in neighborhood schools, and a lack of neighborhood identity or sense of place.

Mr. Stroh noted maps posted around the room, which were discussed during the September meeting, displaying the characteristics of Bellevue's housing. A significant portion of the housing, particularly north of I-90, is 50 years or older. Mr. Stroh noted age alone is not an issue as long as the housing is being properly maintained and meets the needs of today's families. A look at reinvestment patterns indicates that some areas are experiencing remodeling and additions while other areas are not choosing to reinvest in their homes. Similarly, infill construction is more active in some areas than others.

Continuing with the maps, Mr. Stroh said a typical house for today's family is 2,000 square feet, which is larger than the standard size in the 1950s and 1960s. Turning to a map of code

¹ Ms. Balducci arrived at 6:07 p.m.

² Mr. Lee arrived at 6:45 p.m.

complaints, Mr. Stroh noted property maintenance complaints tend to be clustered in specific areas of the community. Additional patterns depicted in the maps are school enrollment, the presence of neighborhood associations, and crime statistics.

Mr. Stroh reviewed two possible models for addressing older neighborhoods. One is to preserve and maintain neighborhoods as they are and the other is an emphasis on redevelopment and encouraging more significant changes.

Cheryl Kuhn, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, reviewed concerns raised by a focus group of residents. An overriding theme was a feeling of vulnerability, for instance, when anchor stores leave shopping centers and the centers begin to deteriorate. A second priority for residents is keeping and attracting families with children in their neighborhoods. Ms. Kuhn described a recent Saturday in which volunteers worked to clear an overgrown yard. She noted that property maintenance issues evoke strong emotions among residents. Citizens want to be proud of their neighborhoods and they are concerned about the impact of poorly maintained homes and yards on their property values. Additional concerns of residents include the conversion of owner-occupied housing to rental and group housing, the decline of neighborhood shopping centers, and the lack of pedestrian facilities or poorly maintained sidewalks and curbs.

Mr. Stroh summarized that some neighborhoods are suffering from a lack of private investment as evidenced by declining appearance, increasing conversion to rentals, code violations, economic stagnation, a loss of pride in neighborhoods, and a feeling of vulnerability. He reviewed the following proposed principles for action;

1. The goal is to restore and revitalize older neighborhoods that might, without intervention, experience declining levels of private investment.
2. Encourage and act as a catalyst for additional private investment in the community.
3. Help neighborhoods to age gracefully and incorporate change while maintaining the existing character of the neighborhood.
4. Aim for balanced investments by private homeowners, commercial property owners, local government, and schools.
5. Start with the elements identified through Phase 1 of the Neighborhood Investment Strategy and build from there.

Mr. Stroh highlighted the following key action areas:

- Housing maintenance and reinvestment,
- Neighborhood gathering places,
- School confidence and participation,
- Sidewalks and pedestrian connections,
- Neighborhood image, and
- Neighborhood leadership and capacity.

Attachment B (Page SS 2-5 of the Council packet) provides a toolkit of programs, services, and resources for addressing neighborhood issues.

Dr. Davidson reiterated his ongoing concern about the Comprehensive Plan proposal to allow detached accessory dwelling units. He feels this could contribute to increased rental housing and negative changes within neighborhoods. Dr. Davidson commended staff on the presentation. However, he is hesitant regarding the extent to which the City should become involved in intervening in neighborhood issues.

Mr. Degginger favors an approach combining education and enforcement.

Ms. Balducci lives in East Bellevue and consistently hears residents' concerns about neighborhood livability. She emphasized the importance of partnerships with private development and investment. She feels detached ADUs, if done properly, can provide needed housing units, particularly for elderly family members.

Mr. Chelminiak feels it is critical that the primary house be owner-occupied in the case of ADUs. Regarding property maintenance, he advocates neighbors working together. His neighborhood holds cleanup days twice a year in which dumpsters are provided and everyone works on getting rid of unwanted items and cleaning up their yards.

Mr. Chelminiak noted one idea in the toolkit document for a tool loan program for residents. While his initial reaction was that people can rent tools, he acknowledged he occasionally has the need to use a table saw. He wondered if local schools with tools and work areas could become partners as a community resource.

Mr. Noble expressed support for staff's presentation and feels the toolkit is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Lee concurred. However, he cautioned against over-regulation or placing burdensome constraints on property owners. He noted a healthy real estate market in Bellevue and that homes sell quickly.

Mayor Marshall noted Council consensus that some neighborhoods in Bellevue need more attention. She suggested drafting an interest statement of Council's priorities and policies in this area. She supports the importance of partnerships and suggested the City could compile and provide a list of contractors that could be used by residents. She noted partnership possibilities with Home Depot and the Master Builders Association. In line with the idea of volunteer work parties, she suggested the City could maintain a database of homes and residents in need to be used by volunteers looking for projects on an ongoing basis.

In reference to the idea of a tool library, Mayor Marshall expressed concern about the potential liability risk associated with lending power tools. She acknowledged she often hears from residents about absentee landlords and their poorly maintained properties. She would like to see Comprehensive Plan policies regarding neighborhood gathering places and shopping centers to encourage revitalization. She supports and encourages partnerships with schools and groups including Leadership Eastside.

Mr. Lee expressed support for neighborhood work parties and cleanup days as described by Councilmember Chelminiak. However, he prefers to see residents sponsoring these events rather than the City becoming involved in organizing or funding them.

Mr. Stroh confirmed that staff will draft an interest statement reflecting staff's recommendations and Council's discussion. Mayor Marshall asked staff to provide preliminary cost estimates for key ideas and initiatives.

Mayor Marshall thanked staff for the presentation and for their work with residents.

(b) 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update and Land Use Code Amendments

Deputy City Manager Ed Oberg noted Council's ongoing discussions regarding the 2004 update to the Comprehensive Plan and accompanying Land Use Code amendments.

Kathleen Burgess, Comprehensive Planning Manager, said tonight's discussion will focus on the first set of elements presented to Council on October 4: Vision, Land Use, Economic Development, Citizen Participation, Utilities, Capital Facilities, Transportation, Urban Design, and Downtown Subarea Plan. Packet materials beginning on page SS 2-10 amend policy language in response to suggestions made by Council during previous discussions.

In the Introduction Element (Vision), Council agreed to changing "Community of Choice" to "Great Place to Live" and to replacing the term "knowledge-worker" with "worker," which will be more fully defined.

Within the Citizen Participation Element, Council agreed to the following revision to policy CP-1 (Option 2 in packet): "Encourage and facilitate expanded public participation and education..." The statement will be split into two sentences. Council agreed to the rewording of policy CP-5 (Page SS 2-12). Council agreed with the wording of policy CP-6 with one revision: "Utilize Citizen Advisory Committees or other methods that represent a broad spectrum of ~~citizen~~ viewpoints as part of the public involvement program." Council agreed with staff's revision to policy CP-7.

Moving to the Land Use Element, Growth Management Act subsection, Council approved Option 2 language emphasizing regional cooperation (Page SS 2-14), amended to delete specific examples of regional forums. Council agreed with Ms. Burgess' recommendation to wait to finalize the wording of policy LU-4 regarding minimum density. The Planning Commission is holding a public hearing on October 20, and staff will bring the Commission's recommendation to Council on November 8.

In the Capital Facilities Element, Council approved Option 1 regarding inclusion of the word "interim" in reference to essential public facilities.

Moving to the Downtown Subarea Plan, Ms. Burgess explained that policy S-DT-94 was recommended by the Planning Commission. Council approved the language recommended by staff as Option 2 (Page SS 2-15), which encourages new development to provide open space

amenities accessible to the public on the south side of Main Street between 108th Avenue SE and Bellevue Way SE.

Council did not reach consensus on proposed language regarding a linear green buffer on the south side of Main Street between 112th Avenue SE and 110th Place SE. Mr. Degginger noted that Option 1 follows the recommendations of the Downtown Implementation Plan CAC and the Planning Commission. Mr. Chelminiak would like to retain the option for extending a green buffer farther west to 108th. Ms. Burgess will bring back revised policy language for Council consideration.

3. Discussion of Regular Session Agenda Items 11(a) and 11(b)

Mayor Marshall suggested staff presentation of Regular Session Agenda Items 11(a) and 11(b).

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman explained that Agenda Item 11(a), Ordinance No. 5553, represents the City's acceptance of approximately \$1.4 million in federal funding to support the City's 2005 Urban Overlay Project. The project includes the rehabilitation and resurfacing of pavement on five roadway segments in downtown Bellevue.

Mayor Marshall thanked staff for aggressively pursuing grant funds.

Mr. Sparrman said Agenda Item 11(b) is a motion to increase the project budget for Cougar Mountain Way Corridor Improvements and to approve Resolution No. 7092, which authorizes an amendment to increase the construction contract with Wilder Construction.

Assistant Transportation Director David Berg described improvements along the corridor including the undergrounding of utilities. Construction began in early March and the contractor has worked hard to meet Council's goal to complete the project within one construction season. Striping and landscaping remain to be completed over the next few weeks.

Cost overruns have occurred in five areas: 1) franchise utility underground trench, 2) traffic control labor, 3) retaining walls, 4) undergrounding of public utilities, and 5) additional material quantities needed. Extra construction expenses are \$964,874, for a revised construction contract amount of \$4,256,863. Mr. Berg noted that the original contract bid was approximately \$500,000 below the engineer's estimate. With funds remaining in the project budget, the amount of the requested project budget increase is \$855,476. The amended total project budget is \$6,591,476.

At 8:01 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

kaw